

# Conclusion

The development of a **Charter for Public Education** has become much more than an exercise of committing words to paper. It is a living example of participatory democracy. With over 1500 participants in community meetings around the province voicing their deepest feelings, beliefs, anxieties and hopes for public education, a process has begun which is assuming a life of its own. More than 10,000 copies of the **Charter** have already been circulated with requests for more copies arriving daily. Numerous presentations have been made by panel members to diverse groups around the province, across Canada and internationally, with inquiries and communication regarding the **Charter** from every continent. The web site has made the process and the **Charter**, in both Canadian official languages, available to every corner of the globe.

113.2, 113.10, 113.15, 114.1, 114.5, 114.7, 114.8, 114.18, 114.20, 115.3, 116.3, 116.7, 121.1, 123.13, 125.5, 125.6, 129.2, 129.7, 130.6, 131.11, 132.5, 132.12, 132.14, 133.4, 138.9

The panel discovered a thirst for participation in discussions about what is good and right and how important public education is to the survival of our democracy. It is ironic that, as panel members fan out to meet requests for information and continued discussion, the current Minister of Education in British Columbia has declined a request from the panel to meet and discuss the **Charter for Public Education**. More than anything else, the panel has been struck by the contrast between the inspiring, living, energized discussion and desire for action found in communities across the province of British Columbia and the distant, resistant representation of democracy which places the will of the people in the hands of a few.

The publication of this report of the **Charter for Public Education** panel represents not the end of a process but merely the end of the beginning. It has become clear that the consultation and publication of the **Charter** and the final report are only part of an awareness process. It has already led to a period of serious engagement by individuals, groups and organizations and, the panel hopes, an implementation plan to see that the vision created is not lost to inertia and bureaucracy.

With this in mind, some of the **Charter** panel members have committed to continuing the process. Over the coming months panel members will seek out support and interest as they design an engagement and implementation strategy. The panel will seek financial and moral support from groups and organizations that are interested in supporting and implementing the promise and vision of the **Charter for Public Education**.

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation has also made a commitment, not only to provide transitional funding for the panel to continue its independent activities, but to pursue its own process of engagement and implementation through its 43,000 members, its network of local associations and specialist associations.

The panel understands that the BCTF may pursue some of the following plans:

- develop workshops/presentations on the **Charter** as a whole and on sections of the **Charter**;
- organize a provincial conference tentatively entitled "The Schools We Need" for partner groups with the participation of the **Charter** panel;
- hold an international conference on efforts to popularize the principles of public education with participation and discussion of the **Charter** and similar tools for building consensus and commitment;
- work with its members and local associations to continue discussions on the principles of public education in schools, districts and communities;
- bring the **Charter** to school planning councils for discussion, and to plan concrete ways to implement the principles.

The **Charter** panel intends to continue its work in the following areas:

- continue meeting with school boards, unions, associations, community groups and interested individuals and agencies;
- call for formal endorsements of the **Charter**;
- call on school boards to endorse and put in practice the **Charter** principles;
- continue to work with school boards seeking to implement the **Charter** principles;
- develop a template for community meetings to replicate the participatory nature of the public hearing process;
- organize provincial conferences for students;
- build and operate a fully interactive web site for on line discussion of public education and the **Charter** principles;
- continue efforts to communicate with the provincial government on the **Charter** process and principles.

The panel foresees the **Charter** becoming a dynamic tool for use in communities and organizations to further the principles of public education in British Columbia and beyond. Those interested in working with the panel or seeking further information can contact the panel

members at [charter@publiced.ca](mailto:charter@publiced.ca) or visit the web site at [www.charter.publiced.ca](http://www.charter.publiced.ca)



# Appendices

## **Appendix I** – Excerpt from the ***International Declaration on the Rights of the Child***

...the development of personality, mental and physical abilities, respect for human rights, cultural identity, language and values, a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes, friendship among ethnic, language and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin, respect for the natural environment, cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity. (Articles 29 and 31, pp 15-16)

## **Appendix II** – Excerpt from the ***World Declaration on Education for All***

...essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes)... to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning... (Art. 1, para. 1.)

## **Appendix III** – Excerpt from ***Learning: The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century***

If it is to succeed in its tasks, education must be organized around four fundamental types of learning which, throughout a person's life, will in a way be the pillars of knowledge: *learning to know*, that is acquiring the instruments of understanding; *learning to do*, so as to be able to act creatively on one's environment; *learning to live together* so as to participate and cooperate with other people in all human activities; and *learning to be*, an essential progression which proceeds from the previous three. Of course, these four paths of knowledge all form a whole, because there are many points of contact, intersection and exchange among them.(pg. 86)

**Appendix IV – Excerpts from *Learning: The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century***

... education systems must not themselves lead to exclusion. Competition, which is in certain cases favourable to intellectual development, can also take the form of undue selection by academic results. Academic underachievement then becomes irreversible and frequently leads to social marginalization and exclusion. (pg. 57)

Every day, in fact, in their work, in cultural activities, in associations or as consumers, all members of the community must individually accept their responsibilities towards others. Schools must therefore prepare people for this role by instructing them in their rights and duties, and also by developing their social skills by encouraging teamwork. (pg. 61)

Apart from the socialization process that early childhood centres and programmes allow to begin, there is evidence that children who receive early childhood education are more favourably disposed towards school and less likely to drop out prematurely than those who do not. Early schooling can contribute to equality of opportunity by helping to overcome the initial handicaps or a disadvantaged social or cultural environment. (pg.121)

Community participation in education, particularly at the basic education level, must go hand-in-hand with commitment and strong action on the part of the state, which has an important role to play in ensuring that the children of all communities have the chance to receive a good education and adults are given learning opportunities relevant both to their work and to their quality of life. (pg.124)

Schooling should help pupils acquire, on the one hand, the tools for dealing with the new technologies and, on the other, the aptitudes for managing conflict and violence. They need to develop the creativity and empathy necessary for them to become actively participating and creative citizens of tomorrow. (pg. 126)

Academic evaluations, which are part of the general assessment, should not result in selection by failure or by stereotypes, shunting the weaker pupils systematically in the direction of manual work, or girls systematically away from technology and science. In other words, guidance entails evaluation based on a subtle mix of educational criteria and a forecast of the adolescent's future personality. (pg 129)

The primary aim of education systems must be to make children from marginal or disadvantaged backgrounds less socially vulnerable, so as to break the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion. The handicaps that schoolchildren are suffering from must be identified, handicaps that are often linked to their family backgrounds, and policies of positive discrimination towards those who are having the most difficulties are needed. (pg. 136)

**Appendix V** – Excerpt from *Learning: The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*

The primary aim of education systems must be to make children from marginal or disadvantaged backgrounds less socially vulnerable, so as to break the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion. The handicaps that schoolchildren are suffering from must be identified, handicaps that are often linked to their family backgrounds, and policies of positive discrimination towards those who are having the most difficulties are needed. (pg. 136)

**Appendix VI** – Excerpt from *The Schools We Need*

Equity and excellence in the schools we propose for the province are complementary rather than competing aspirations. There is nothing helpful to be gained by proposing a one-dimensional concept of excellence for a multi-dimensional world. Therefore we propose to:

- increase the range of choices for students in the public system
- expand curriculum and assessment targets to include a broader range of goals from critical thinking to citizenship and parental roles
- focus on “raising the bar” and “closing the gap” for low achieving students (pg. 16)

**Appendix VII** – Excerpt from *The Schools We Need*

One of the main causes of anxiety about the future of public education is a belief that schools do not have adequate funds. Evidence suggests that that the public is concerned not only about levels of funding but also about how funds are allocated – whether money is going where it will

make the most difference. There are high levels of support for increased taxation as a means for providing these funds ... (pg. 6)

**Appendix VIII** – Excerpt from *Campaign for Education, (Education a Public Asset)*

- We are for a broad and responsible vision of education that focuses on academic, educational and social success for young people and adults.
- We are against the market approach to education that advocates competition and the use of academic achievement for the purpose of comparing and ranking educational institutions. We are also against subjecting education to global trade regulations (WTO).
- We are for the enhancement of basic education and special, non-selective projects that are accessible to all.
- We are against selective projects in basic education for which access depends on young people's academic achievement and intelligence quotient or family income.
- We are for the strengthening of public funding of public education.
- We are against the under-funding of public education, public funding of private education and private funding of public education.
- We are for access to public educational institutions as well as to public services.
- We are against cutting back services to the most disadvantaged persons in our schools and against restraints on access to higher education. (pg. 4)

**Appendix IX** – Excerpt from *In Defence of Public Education*

... the one – if not the only – public structure we have which is capable of reaching out to all citizens in all parts of the country and making them feel part of the extended family of citizenship is the public education system. In the classic sense of the inclusive democracy, those simple bricks and mortar buildings, which we call the public schools, are in fact the one remaining open clubhouse of citizenship. (pp 8-14)

**Appendix X** – Excerpt from *A Legacy For Learners*

Recent social changes have renewed public interest in the school's capacity to preserve, or even restore, ideas about community which we hold dear. The growth in urbanization, population, occupational and social differentiation, and social diversity and ethnicity have led in recent years, some suggest, to a vanishing sense of community and to a weakening of the bonds that hold us together. (pg. 14)

**Appendix XI** – Excerpt from the *School Act* (British Columbia)

...all its members receive an education that enables them to become personally and publicly useful, thereby increasing the strength and contributions to the health and stability of that society;

AND WHEREAS the purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy;

# Bibliography

Alberta Teachers' Association (2002), Falling Through the Cracks: A Summary of What we Heard About Teaching and Learning in Alberta Schools. Alberta: Alberta Teachers Association.

Allaire, Luc (2002) Education: A Public Asset, in CSQ News September – October 2002.

Delors, J., (1996) Learning: The Treasure Within. Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

United Nations General Assembly, November 20, 1989. International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Leithwood, K., Fullan, M., Watson, N., (2003). The Schools We Need. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Ministry of Education, British Columbia (2000). The Primary Program. Victoria, British Columbia: Ministry of Education.

Ryerson, Egerton (1829). Editorial by Ryerson in Christian Guardian(1829).

Saul, John Ralston, (2002) In Defense of Public Education. In Horizons Fall, 2002 (pp. 8-14)

Sullivan, B. (Commissioner) (1988) The Report of the Royal Commission on Education: A Legacy for Learners. Victoria, British Columbia: Province of British Columbia, Queen's Printer.

World Declaration on Education for All (1990) Jomtien, Thailand: World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP.